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UNCLAS ISTANBUL 000733

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CONSUL GENERAL OUTREACH TO BURSA, TURKEY

¶1. (U) Summary: The Consul General traveled May 2-3, 2006 to Bursa -- Turkey's fourth largest city and one of its most dynamic commercial centers with important textile and automobile manufacturing -- to address a conference on globalization and entrepreneurship. In addition to meeting with the Governor and Mayor and speaking to the press, CG Jones met with representatives of U.S. firms in the region, visited the American Corner, spoke with local TV and print media, and met with academics from Bursa's Uludag University. End Summary.

Local Politicians

¶2. (SBU) With Governor Canpolat, the CG discussed Bursa's economic growth, the environmental challenges it faces, and the U.S. commercial presence. The Governor complained that Turkish business people traveling to the U.S. should be treated in the same way as U.S. business people traveling to Turkey. The CG replied that Turkish business people are welcome in the U.S., and offered to send representatives from the consular section to Bursa to explain and clarify visa procedures.

¶3. (SBU) In a wide-ranging meeting with local AKP Mayor Sahin (a graduate of Baghdad University), the CG noted Cargill's contribution to the local economy and encouraged U.S. participation in Bursa's light-rail project. She also noted earlier EXIM bank financial offerings for California-based Earth Tech company participation in the project. The Mayor deferred to the Treasury on the matter of project funding, but generally welcomed U.S. participation and asked about larger U.S. involvement in the region.

Commercial and Academic Contacts

¶4. (U) Prior to meeting with local officials, the CG lunched with Galip Sukaya, Managing Director of Earth Tech, a leading U.S. company in the region and manager of the Bursa light-rail project. In subsequent press interviews with local TV and print media, Jones emphasized the importance of such economic ties between U.S. firms and Bursa. In addition to responding to a series of questions, the CG highlighted Cargill's contribution to economic growth in the region, expressed interest in further developing the commercial relationship between Turkey and the U.S., and mentioned the Fulbright program. She also met with leading academics from Uludag University, and discussed the broader context of U.S.-Turkey relations.

Outreach and Message

¶5. (U) The highlight of the visit was a speech on globalization and entrepreneurship at the Bursa Chamber of Commerce and Industry's "4th Conference on Entrepreneurship." Before an audience of around 400-500 business people, press, and students (future entrepreneurs), the CG described how the benefits of globalization exceed its costs, and how Turkey would benefit by continuing to open its business sectors to outside investment and expertise. Other speakers noted how the success of their firms underscores Turkey's positive economic conjuncture, with one panelist commenting that Turkey's economy has grown by 30% over the last five years. Follow-on questions from the audience were all directed at the CG, who reiterated the U.S. position on E.U. accession and the possibility of Turkish entrepreneurial development in times of turbulence in neighboring Iraq and Iran. During the conference, the CG visited the American Corner, also housed in the Bursa Chamber of Commerce, and spoke with its Coordinator on how to expand outreach operations.

JONES